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Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 061190

EXDIS TOSEC 737

FOLLOWING REPEAT MADRID 1845 ACTION SECSTATE 18 MAR

QUOTE

S E C R E T MADRID 1845

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SP
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER ARIAS

1. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER ARIAS THIS MORNING ACCOMPANIED BY DCM. ALSO PRESENT WAS ANTONIO DE OYARZABAL, ARIAS' FOREIGN OFFICE AIDE. WE TALKED ABOUT 35 MINUTES ABOUT US-SPANISH RELATIONS; SPANISH-EUROPENAN RELATION; PORTUGAL (ABOUT WHICH ARIAS IS MUCH CONCERNED); AND, BRIEFLY, ARIAS' INTERNAL PROGRAM. ARIAS WAS VERY CORDIAL AND MADE CLEAR HIS OWN ATTACHMENT TO US-SPANISH RELATIONS AND HIS RECOGNITION FOR WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAS DONE FOR SPAIN.

2. I OPENED BY REFERRING TO THE IMPORTANCE WHICH THE
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PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY ATTACH TO CONTINUED CLOSE

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RELATIONS BETWEEN SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES AND TO OUR
COOPERATIVE DEFENSE EFFORTS WHICH I SAID WERE OF BENEFIT
NOT ONLY TO OUR TWO COUNTRIES, BUT TO THE WEST AS A WHOLE.
I ALSO EXTENDED THE PRESIDENT'S BEST WISHES TO THE PRIME
MINISTER. I SAID THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES
WERE EXCELLENT AND THAT I HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH MAINTAINING
AND FURTHERING THOSE RELATIONS.

3. ARIAS RESPONDED AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH. AFTER WELCOM-
ING ME, HE EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION WITH THE CLOSE RELA-
TIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SPAIN AND UNDERLINED
THE IMPORANTCE OF THAT RELATIONSHIP ESPECIALLY NOW. RE-
FERRING TO SPAIN AS, INDEED, PART OF EUROPE AND, THUS, AS
PART OF THE OVERALL WESTERN STRUCTURE, ARIAS SAID THAT
WHILE HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE RELUCTANCE IN PAST YEARS OF
OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO HAVE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH
SPAIN, HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THIS CONTINUED RELUCTANCE
IN VIEW OF THE EOLUTION OF EVENTS. SPAIN WAS NOT WHAT
IT USED TO BE AND IT WAS NECESSARY THAT THE EUROPE TO
WHICH SPAIN BELONGED SHOULD TAKE COGNIZANCE OF THE EFFORTS
WHICH ARE BEING MADE IN THE SPAIN OF TODAY. HE THEN PRO-
CEEDED TO DISCUSS THE PORTUGUESE SITUATION AT GREAT
LENGTH AND EXPRESSED HIS DEEP CONCERN OVER WHAT WAS
OCCURRING IN PORTUGAL SINCE "SPINOLA'S LAST INSANE ACT"
PORTUGAL WAS A SERIOUS THREAT TO SPAIN NOT ONLY BECAUSE
OF THE WAY THE SITUATION THERE WAS DEVELOPING, BUT BE-
CAUSE OF FOREIGN SUPPORT IT MIGHT ULTIMATELY RECEIVE
WHICH COULD BE HOSTILE TO SPAIN. HE EMPHASIZED THAT
SPAIN WOULD ALWAYS BE ANTI-COMMUNIST NO MATTER WHAT THE
CONSEQUENCES; ITS HISTORY ASSURED THAT. ADEQUATE PRECAU-
TIONS WERE BEING TAKEN TO PREVENT EVENTS IN PORTUGAL FROM
SPILLING OVER THE SPANISH BORDER. SPAIN WOULD FIGHT
THE ANTI-COMMUNIST BATTLE ALONE IF NECESSARY. IT WAS
STRONG AND IT WAS PROSPEROUS. IT WOULD NOT BEG FOR HELP,
BUT IT HOPED IT WOULD HAVE THE COOPERATION AND UNDERSTAND-
ING OF ITS FRIENDS NOT ONLY IN THE SPANISH INTEREST, BUT
IN THE INTEREST OF ALL THOSE WHO THOUGHT THE SAME. ARIAS
SAID HE HOPED AND TRUSTED THAT I WOULD BE A CAREFUL OB-
SERVER AND AN ACCURATE INTERPRETER OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING
IN SPAIN, BECAUSE IT WAS TRUE THAT SPAIN'S IMAGE ABORAD
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WAS SO OUT OF FOCUS.

4. I SAID I HAD INTENDED TO DISCUSS PORTUGAL WITH HIM IF
HE HAD NOT DONE SO HIMSELF. THE UNITED STATES WAS ALSO
VERY CONCERNED ABOUT EVENTS IN PORTUGAL AND IT APPEARED
THAT THE SITUATION WAS MOVING TOWARD A MILITARY REGIME
ON THE LEFT. AND "BY LEFT", I MEANT MOVING TOWARD IN-
CREASED INFLUENCE OF THE COMMUNISTS. I EXPLAINED THAT THE

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UNITED STATES HAD EMBARKED ON AN AID PROGRAM DESIGNED TO
HELP THE MODERATE ELEMENTS IN PORTUGAL. THE PRIME MINIS-
TER COULD BE SURE THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT PERMIT
ITS AID TO GO TO ANY COMMUNIST GOVT OR ELEMENTS IN
PORTUGAL. I ADDED THAT I AGREED WITH PRIME MINISTER
THAT TE SITUATION IN PORTUGAL NOT ONLY REPRESENTED
DANGERS FOR SPAIN, BUT ALSO RAISED SERIOUS QUESTIONS CON-
CERNING THE ENTIRE STABILITY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA. POINTS
OF TENSION EXISTED IN BOTH THE EASTERN AND WESTERN PARTS OF
THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND THESE WERE OPEN TO EXPLOITATION BY OUR
COMMON ADVERSARIES. WHILE IT WAS TRUE WE WERE IN A PERIOD OF
DETENTE, NONE OF US COULD AFFORD TO WEAKEN OUR DEFENSIVE
STRUCTURES.

5. I THEN TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT HE COULD BE SURE THA
I WOULD INDEED ENDEAVOR TO BE AN ACCURATE INTERPRETER OF
EVENTS IN SPAIN. I HOPED I WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO
MEET WITH HIM FROM TIME TO TIME TO EXCHANGE VIEWS. I THEN
WENT ON TO SAY THAT I HAD READ WITH MUCH INTEREST HIS SPEECH
OF FEBRUARY 12 LAST YEAR AND WAS ALSO FAMILIAR WITH HIS OTHER
STATEMENTS AND INTERVIEWS CONCERNING HIS PROGRAM.

6. ARIAS RESPONDED TO THIS OPENING BY SAYING HE WAS CON-
VINCED THAT SPAIN MUST BE DEMOCRATIZED AND MUST OPEN ITS
POLITICAL PROCESS TO GREATER POPULAR PARTICIPATION. THE
STRUCTURES WHICH WERE NECESSARY TO BRING SPAIN TO STABILITY
AND PROSPERITY WERE NO LONGER ADAPTED TO THE PRESENT DAY.
HOWEVER, THE SPINOLA EXPERIENCE HAD CONVINCED HIM OF ONE
THING: THAT "ONE SHOULD NOT GO UP OR DOWN A HILL TOO FAST."
HE FULLY INTENDED TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO CARRY OUT HIS ANNOUNCED
PROGRAM IN THE REMAINING FOUR YEARS OF HIS TERM IN OFFICE.
HE HOPED IT WOULD BE SUBSTANTIALLY COMPETED BY THAT TIME, BUT
HE HAD NO INTENTION OF RISKING CHAOS OR OF FALLING INTO TRAPS,
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AS HAD SPINOLA, BU MOVING TOO FAST. MOREOVER, SPAIN COULD IN
NO WAY BE COMPARED
TO PORTUGAL AND HE HAD GREAT CONFIDENCE
IN THE STABILITY AND INTERNAL SECURITY OF SPAIN.

7. IN THANKING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THIS EXPOSITION, I
SAID I THOUGHT IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT
THAT SPAIN MAKE ITS OWN
FULL EFFORTS TO EXPLAIN TO THE WESTERN EUROPEANS WHAT SPAIN
IS DOING TODAY IN THIS EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS. AS HE KNEW,
THE UNITED STATES HAD LONG FAVORED A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN SPAIN AND NATO AND OTHER EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS.
WE SHOULD LIKE TO SEE SPAIN MORE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH NATO
AND EUROPE, AND I BELIEVED THAT SPAIN COULD CONTRIBUTE EFF-
ECTIVELY TO THIS PROCESS IF IT COULD EFFECTIVELY CARRY THIS

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MESSAGE OF EVOLUTION TO THE OTHERS.

8. ARIAS CONCLUDED BY WISHING ME WELL AND BY SAYING HE WOULD WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH ME PERIODICALLY. I SHOULD FEEL FREE TO COME TO HIM ON ANY GIVEN ISSUE IF IT COULD NOT BE OTHERWISE SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED. I THANKED HIM AND SAID I HOPED WE WOULD DEVELOP CLOSE AND FRIENDLY PERSONAL RELATIONS.

9. COMMENT: ARIAS WAS ON THE WHOLE RELAXED AND MOST CORDIAL. IT WAS VERY OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS DEEPLY TROUBLED BY EVENTS IN PORTUGAL AND HE SPOKE QUITE INTENSELY ON THE SUBJECT. IT WOULD SEEM CLEAR THAT PORTUGUESE EVENTS HAVE HAD A STRONG NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE GENERAL NOTION OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION. WHILE HE SEEMS TO BE COMMITED TO LIBER-ALIZATION, THE PROCESS WILL BE EVEN MORE UPHILL NOW THAT IT WAS BEFORE. HE CONVEYED CLEARLY TO ME THE IMPORTANCE THAT HE ATTACHES TO CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. ALTHOUGH MY REFERENCES TO NATO PROVIDED AN OPENING FOR HIM TO TALK ABOUT THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS IF HE SO CHOSE, HE DI NOT MENTION THEM AND, INDEED, HE MIGHT NOT YET HAVE HAD A REPORT FROM ROVIRA ON THE LAST ROUND IN WASHINGTON. UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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